

Quick Strokes

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Dvorak

is the name of the inventor of the rational arrangement for alphanumeric keyboards and is the name for any arrangement that is derived from his principles. The first name is August, and the last name is pronounced in three syllables. The vowel after the D is short u, like the one in the before a consonant.

The grid:

Transverse rows are called ranks and longitudinal ones are files. The ranks are lower, middle, upper, and top, corresponding to Rows B, C, D, and E in the International Standardization Organization numbering system. Files are designated by the character they contain in the middle rank.

Rhythm

is so important in keyboard work that the other Dvorak principles are all subordinate to it. Electrically powered impression has not robbed rhythm of its importance. Each stroke must still be smart enough to actuate a cam, must fall on the right key, and must be delivered without waste of time.

All language is spoken in syllables and is mostly so written; each syllable has its vowel, which only rarely occurs in a cluster of more than two. The only way, so far discovered and revealed, to attain an iambic rhythm on an alphanumeric keyboard is to do as Captain Dvorak has done and assign all the vowels to one hand, the left, and to assign to that hand also only consonants that are often preceded or followed by a right-hand consonant or a thumbstroke.

Then what of c and t, which also occur quite often, like p, centrally in consonant clusters? They also occur often intervocalically and moreover are of

higher incidence. The vowels are so frequent that with those and two high-incidence punctuation marks and two or three of low incidence, the left hand has enough to do without any frequent consonants.

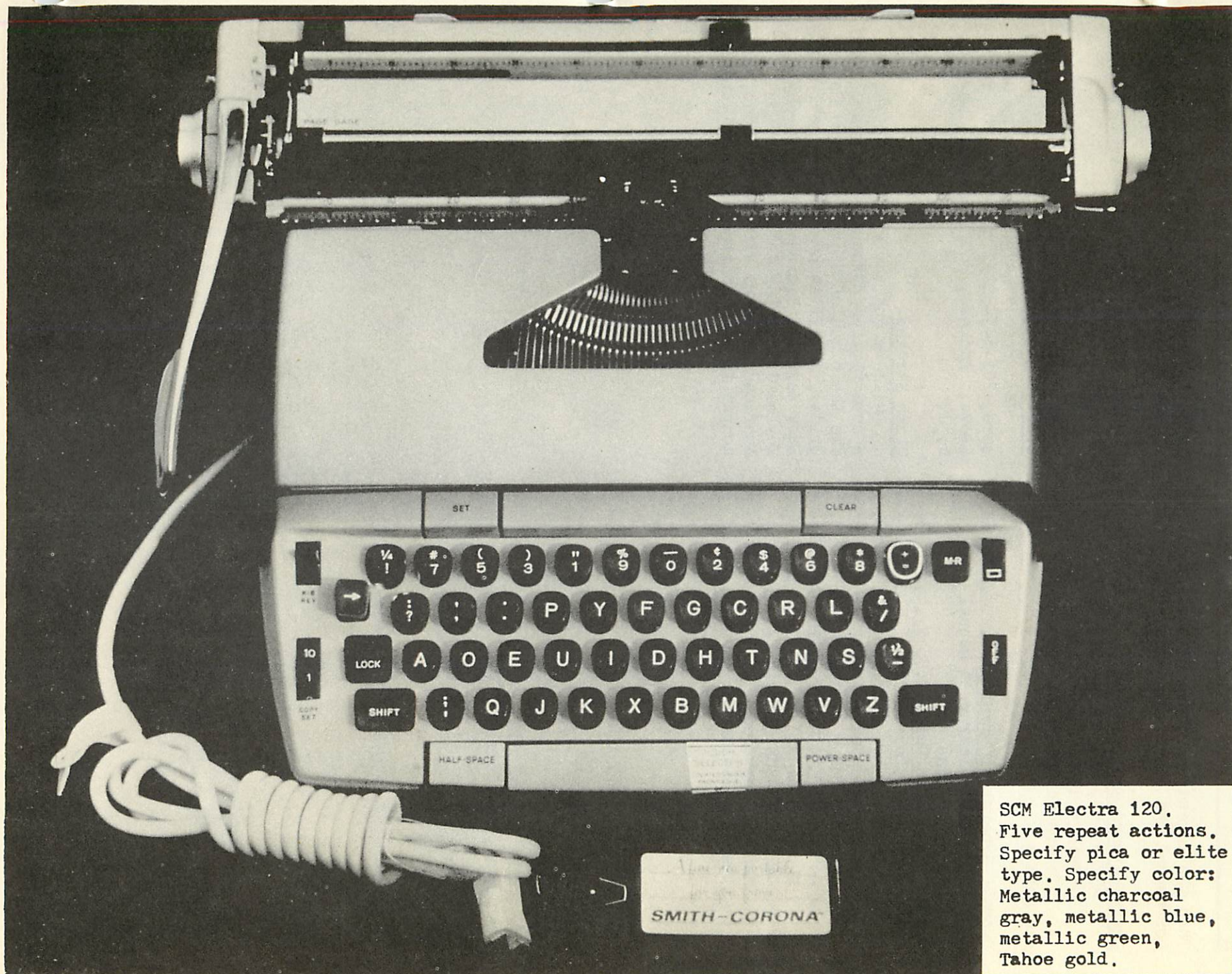
The assignment of a lower stroke to the left hand has little to do with the prevalence of right handedness.

The skew.

The waste of finger travel on the traditional "qwerty" arrangement is not, in itself, that arrangement's worst vice. It is vicious because the frequent reaches and hurdles, particularly those that are made with the same finger that stroked last, break up the rhythm. Some of these are unavoidable and some are found even in an optimal Dvorak arrangement. Few, however, and rare ones, are performed by the left hand. The skew of the keyboard grid permits the right hand to do what comes naturally, reaching up and in or out and down. The left-hand reaches and hurdles are the more difficult up-and-out or down-and-in ones.

A reach is a stroke in a rank above or below the rank in which the last stroke fell. A hurdle is a stroke in the rank beyond the next one. There are also inboard reaches, into the d and i files, and outboard reaches, into the hyphen file, and, on Dvorak, these are seldom stroked by the same finger that dealt the last previous stroke.

If the same hand must stroke twice in succession, and if the same finger that has just stroked is not the right one, then which finger should we assign that stroke to? Answer: To the next finger inboard, that is, toward the thumb, or, next best, any inboard finger. The principle that is illustrated here is



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Quick Strokes
 267 Ellis Avenue
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